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ABSTRACT

Australian commonwealth, state, and territory ministers for education and training established a joint working party to develop a draft national policy on adult and community education (ACE) in Australia. Recognizing that the precise boundaries of ACE are best set by individual states and territories, the working party refrained from developing any strict definition of ACE and instead based its draft policy on the following underlying principles: (1) adults have diverse and changing learning needs throughout their lives and therefore require a correspondingly diverse range of accessible and affordable education services with variety of provision and plurality of choice; (2) adult learning is best delivered through learner-centered curricula and methodologies; and (3) community-based services that support and strengthen existing community networks and help create new ones are likely to be highly responsive to the needs of their communities. The draft policy's framework was as follows: (1) realization of the potential of ACE; (2) access and equity; (3) opportunities and outcomes; (4) learning pathways; (5) quality; and (6) partnerships. Intended outcomes and strategies for achieving them were developed for each item. (Names and addresses of the working party members are appended.) (MN)

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ED 361 490

DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY

ADULT & COMMUNITY EDUCATION

AEC/MOVEET* WORKING PARTY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL POLICY FOR ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

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AN INVITATION TO RESPOND

RESPONSES TO THIS DRAFT POLICY ARE WARMLY INVITED.

Your State/Territory government representative is the person responsible for consultation on the draft policy and you should contact them about the arrangements in your State/Territory.

Their names and contact numbers are provided on pages 14 and 15.

It is proposed that the national working party reconvene on the 19th and 20th August to consider responses to the draft policy and prepare the final draft for consideration by AEC/MOVEET in September, 1993.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMENT:

The following comments are offered to guide readers in the preparation of a response to the draft:

> The draft policy focuses upon the provision of adult learning opportunities at the community level through a variety of settings and delivery modes. It is a provision which complements the core provision of the school, TAFE and higher education systems and provides alternative access to those systems.
>
> The draft draws upon and builds on the extensive work done in the Senate Enquiry report, **Come in Cinderella**.
>
> The policy has been drafted to accommodate the different arrangements which exist in each of the States and Territories with regard to the provision of adult and community education.

Comments are invited on any matter raised in this draft and on perceived omissions. Readers may wish to comment on matters specific to their State or Territory, or on general matters. All comment is welcome.

Pam Metcalf
EXECUTIVE OFFICER
28th May, 1993

DRAFT

AEC/MOVEET WORKING PARTY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL POLICY FOR ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

POLICY

BACKGROUND

In recent years adult and community education (ACE) has experienced significant growth and is continuing to do so. Course enrolments in the 1980s were almost double those of the 1970s and the growth shows no sign of slowing down. Participation is variously estimated to be in excess of one million per year. ACE interfaces with school education, vocational education and training and higher education, and is by its nature diverse. It was formally acknowledged at the national level in the 1991 report of the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training called **Come in Cinderella - The Emergence of Adult and Community Education** which described ACE as the fourth sector of education.

The Senate report recommended the development of a national policy on ACE to guide its further growth and development. In September, 1992 Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for education and training agreed to establish a joint Working Party to consider the issues and to draft, where appropriate, national policies or principles relating to ACE for further consideration by Ministers. This policy recognises that adult and community education is an educational provision that is complementary to the core provision of the school, TAFE and higher education systems and provides alternative access to these systems.

Some of the recommended strategies may be implemented nationally, while others may require specific State and Territory responses. It is accepted that outcomes and strategies additional to those listed may be adopted by individual authorities and that different priorities may apply between States and Territories.

DESCRIPTION OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

ACE aims to provide opportunities to improve the knowledge, skills and quality of life for adult Australians. ACE aims to meet the diverse lifelong learning needs of adults so that they may confidently participate in society. It contributes to Australia's development as a creative, skilled, flexible and cultured society and in so doing enhances the capacity of local communities to provide educational opportunities for its members.

ACE increases opportunities especially for women and people with special needs who are under-represented in employment and training, for example, people without adequate social and functional skills in English language, literacy and/or numeracy, people with disabilities, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, people not in the paid workforce, people who are geographically or socially isolated, people without post secondary education, older people, low income people and migrants.

ACE identifies and responds educationally to individual, vocational, family, community, cultural and social needs. These needs are met through programs as diverse as literacy, basic education, English language acquisition, study skills, preparation for tertiary education, vocational preparation, job-related training, skills development, retraining and general education.

General adult education programs include history, literature, languages, politics, philosophy, science, arts, crafts, health, personal development and many other subjects. This is the longest standing and best known form of ACE.

General adult education also makes a significant contribution to the development of work skills. Many participants cite vocational purposes as their reason for enrolling in these programs.

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Many more gain skills, confidence, knowledge and understanding from participating, which they then apply in their workplace or in seeking work or in further education and training.

Access, pre-vocational and vocationally specific courses are a rapidly growing component of ACE. Literacy, numeracy, basic education, English as a second language, English language and literacy on the job, tertiary entrance qualifications and accredited vocational courses belong to this category.

ACE supports and encourages local communities to respond to and meet educational needs of their members. It strengthens communities by building capacities as diverse as enterprise skills and community management including skills in committee procedures and organisational processes, and local management of community projects like Landcare.

The whole range of ACE programs is notable for the way it assists adults to enhance their family relationships and their participation in local community activities and broader societal debates around issues like the environment, understanding of specific cultures and histories, and participative democracy.

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

The learning activities of adults pervade all aspects of their lives. The opportunities and avenues for adults to engage in learning are included in the objectives of a wide range of organisations and activities. These include our universities, TAFE institutions and schools, our work places, professional organisations and industry and our cultural, religious, artistic and entertainment centres. Moreover, government agencies, Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local, involved in health, welfare, agriculture, the environment, law, labour, prisons and communications all have major programs which involve the education of the community.

While recognising this diversity, the focus of this policy statement generally concentrates upon the provision of learning opportunities at a community level through a variety of settings and delivery modes. This often involves the harnessing of local expertise and resources.

Given the breadth and diversity, this policy statement is not concerned to provide a definition of the precise boundaries of ACE, recognising that this is best done in each of the States and Territories.

PRINCIPLES

Adult and community education is based on the following principles:-

- adults have diverse and changing learning needs throughout their lives and require a correspondingly diverse range of responses with a variety of provision and a plurality of choice;
- adults expect to be actively involved in decisions about the management, content, style and delivery of their learning;
- adult learning is best delivered through a curriculum and methodology which is learner centred;
- adult learning should be accessible, appropriate and affordable in recognition of differing circumstances and constraints;
- community based services are likely to be highly responsive to the needs of their communities; and
- services should support and strengthen existing community networks and help create new ones to complement existing activities.

GOALS

Goal 1: Realising the Potential of ACE

Goal 2: Access and Equity

Goal 3: Opportunities and Outcomes

Goal 4: Learning Pathways

Goal 5: Quality

Goal 6: Partnerships

These goals provide a national framework within which Commonwealth, State and Territory providers can cooperate in the delivery of high quality ACE. The details of these goals will be reviewed from time to time in response to the changing needs of Australian society. Once adopted, the States and Territories working with the Commonwealth will develop targets for the strategies.

GOAL 1

TO REALISE THE POTENTIAL OF ACE

This goal recognises that ACE has yet to reach its full potential in contributing to the general and vocational education and training of adults and that it will not do so without continuing broad Commonwealth, State, Territory and in some cases Local government recognition.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
1.1 • Policy development at national, Commonwealth, State and Territory levels, in the areas of general adult education and vocational education and training, will reflect the existing and potential role of ACE taking into account that it is largely a community based sector.	(a) Include ACE input in national, Commonwealth, State and Territory discussions relating to general adult and vocational education and training, for example, articulation, recognition of prior learning, accreditation, educational research, competency based training and the allocation of resources.
1.2 • Ongoing national policy development regarding ACE will reflect the strengths and needs of all States and Territories and be communicated to relevant Ministers.	(a) Maintain and/or establish appropriate government mechanisms whose charters specifically include the promotion of ACE provision. (b) Identify or establish a national mechanism to provide ongoing advice to Ministers and relevant bodies within the established post-secondary structures.
1.3 • The existing and potential contribution of ACE to vocational educational and training will be considered in the allocation of government resources. • The allocation of government resources for ACE will be based on clear and consistent funding principles.	(a) Design the national data collection system (NATMISS) to: • include the inputs and outputs from ACE. • be able to report separately on the different types of providers of ACE, eg. community based, TAFE. (b) Develop and implement a funding arrangements which are based on clear and consistent funding principles. (c) Remove anomalies which disadvantage ACE, eg. sales tax, payroll tax and fringe benefit tax.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
1.4 • The level of community based ACE provision will be expanded.	**(a)** Allocate government funds to support community based organisational structures as well as specific program delivery. **(b)** Develop a phased expansion strategy. **(c)** Diversify the funding base of community provision by identifying further opportunities for them to conduct programs, eg. fee for service and labour market programs.
1.5 • The community will have a clear understanding of the terminology, role and benefits of ACE.	**(a)** Conduct and support regular promotional campaigns to heighten the profile of ACE. **(b)** Include the role of ACE in general promotional campaigns eg. literacy and special community education campaigns.
1.6 • Australian ACE will interact with national and international organisations, activities and developments in order to contribute to, and draw from overseas experience.	**(a)** Identify and access information from overseas abou' ACE. **(b)** Encourage the involvement of key personnel in international ACE forums and links.

GOAL 2

TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND EQUITY

This goal recognises that ACE has a well developed competence in meeting special educational needs and circumstances and that it will increase learning opportunities, pathways and outcomes for the community, particularly for women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, people from a non-English speaking background, and other groups under-represented in employment, education and training.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
2.1 • There will be greater opportunities for women and adults with special needs to become aware of the possibilities ACE holds for them in developing skills and knowledge.	(a) Support the development and implementation of improved information and advice services. (b) Conduct and support regular promotional campaigns to heighten the profile of ACE so that it becomes a nationally recognised identity. (c) Monitor participation of adults with special needs and the strategies adopted to increase their participation.
2.2 • Modes of delivery of ACE, curriculum design and materials will reflect the special needs of people.	(a) Promote the development of flexible modes of delivery which reflect the needs of women and adults with special needs. (b) Facilitate the provision of appropriate professional development for the deliverers of ACE (c) Disseminate information regarding best practice. (d) Within ACE and between sectors, facilitate cooperative approaches to curriculum development and/or documentation where appropriate. (e) allocate existing curriculum resources to ACE curriculum development and/or documentation.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
2.3 Physical and financial barriers to the participation of women and adults with special needs will be reduced.	**(a)** Provide incentives through designated funding for ACE to address specifically the needs of these adults. **(b)** Provide incentives for ACE to ensure access to services, such as dependent care, counselling and aids for people with disabilities, in order to optimise participation. **(c)** Provide incentives for the development of local provision. **(d)** Provide incentives and develop cooperative arrangements with other providers for the use of distance learning technology to meet the needs of isolated people. **(e)** Facilitate flexible and affordable use by ACE of existing public resources, technology and venues.

GOAL 3

TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUALS

This goal recognises that individuals should be able to participate in learning as is appropriate for their individual needs and aspirations and that ACE will contribute to Australian adults' acquisition of skills, knowledge and confidence necessary for achieving their full potential.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
3.1 • Participation in ACE will increase, particularly by adults who have had less than twelve years of schooling.	**(a)** Support the design and marketing of programs that are relevant and appeal to adults who have not completed twelve years of schooling. **(b)** Facilitate the provision of training for providers in the principles and sound practices of marketing. **(c)** Diversify the funding base of community provision by identifying further opportunities for them to conduct programs, eg. fee for service and labour market programs.
3.2 • There will be increased opportunities for adults to develop and manage their own learning programs.	**(a)** Provide training and access to information about available funding, submission preparation, adult learning principles and program management.
3.3 • ACE will continue to provide programs which reflect learners' desires for - social outcomes - recreational outcomes - vocational outcomes - cultural outcomes - civic outcomes - personal outcomes - including pathways to other sectors/activities.	**(a)** Facilitate the provision of training for providers in the theory and practice of adult learning, in needs assessment and program evaluation. **(b)** Allocate government funds to support community based organisational as well as specific program delivery.

GOAL 4

TO PROVIDE LEARNING PATHWAYS

This goal recognises that for some people ACE is an end in itself but for many it is an opportunity which creates pathways to further learning or employment.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
4.1 • There will be clear pathways for individuals to and from ACE, other education sectors and industry training. • There will be increased recognition by other sectors of the educational outcomes of ACE.	**(a)** ACE will participate in the development and implementation mechanisms for the recognition of the skills and competencies acquired through participation in ACE programs. **(b)** Develop and improve articulation arrangements between ACE, other education sectors and industry training. **(c)** Provide incentives for ACE to provide nationally recognised training or seek recognition of existing programs through NFROT where appropriate to facilitate articulation. **(d)** Develop and implement improved credit transfer arrangements between ACE, other education sectors and industry training. **(e)** Ensure monitoring and provision of advice via a national mechanism on other sectors' role in ACE, especially universities and colleges of TAFE.
4.2 • Adults will be able to make informed choices about their participation in ACE and subsequent activities.	**(a)** Develop mechanisms to provide public information and referral services relating to ACE programs and the learning pathways they provide.

GOAL 5

TO ENSURE QUALITY

This goal recognises that quality is an essential element of cost effectiveness and that students in ACE have expectations that quality will be assured.

- **To ensure quality in provision and outcomes of ACE there will be effective planning, delivery and evaluation of programs, effective financial, human and physical resource management, recruitment and support for competent and committed workers in ACE.**

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
5.1 • ACE programs will be highly rated as meeting the needs of individual participants and offering value for money. • There will be flexible delivery modes in ACE making it responsive to the needs of individual learners.	(a) Ensure the provision of appropriate professional development for the deliverers of ACE. (b) Promote the involvement of adults in determining needs and in planning and delivering ACE in their local communities. (c) Disseminate information regarding best practice and quality assurance. (d) Within ACE and between sectors encourage co-operative approaches to curriculum development/ documentation where appropriate. (e) Improve the capacity to measure and report on the outcomes of ACE.
5.2 • ACE organisations will demonstrate sound management practices. • Funding bodies will be satisfied that the financial management practices of ACE organisations meet accountability criteria.	(a) Facilitate the provision of appropriate professional development for the managers of ACE. (b) Disseminate information regarding best management practice and quality assurance.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
5.3 • Appropriate conditions of employment will operate for both the paid and volunteer workers in ACE. • There will be career path options in ACE.	**(a)** Encourage the development of appropriate conditions of employment for both the paid and volunteer workers in ACE. **(b)** Encourage the development of career path options. **(c)** Encourage professional development and clear study pathways for staff. **(d)** Encourage short-term staff exchanges between providers within and between the States and Territories.
5.4 • There will be appropriate research and evaluation undertaken to support the further development of ACE.	**(a)** Collect comprehensive and sophisticated qualitative and quantitative data at regular intervals. **(b)** Facilitate the development of research skills and activity within ACE to inform planning, including action/participatory research. **(c)** Examine the likely effectiveness and practice of a clearing house in ACE. **(d)** Disseminate information (journal/ newsletter) regarding best practice and quality assurance.

GOAL 6

TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS OF COMMUNITY WITH GOVERNMENT AND ENTERPRISE.

This goal recognises that the strengths inherent in the community can be complemented by government support and that government strategies can be enhanced by the experience and contribution of communities and also that ACE can provide cost effective education and training for enterprises seeking specific training for their employees.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
6.1 • There will be government support for the development and enhancement of community based provision of ACE.	**(a)** Allocate government funds to support community based organisational costs as well as specific program delivery. **(b)** Facilitate flexible and affordable use by ACE of existing public resources, technology and venues. **(c)** Maintain and develop regional structures where appropriate to increase community involvement in priority setting and allocation of government funds. **(d)** Promote the involvement of adults in determining needs and in planning and delivering ACE in their local communities. **(e)** Facilitate the provision of training for ACE managers and organisers, both paid and volunteer workers.
6.2 • There will be increased recognition by government of community based ACE as a vehicle for delivering government education and training programs.	**(a)** Encourage government agencies to seek ACE participation in their community education and training programs.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
6.3 • There will be greater cooperation and more partnership between ACE providers, and other government agencies and the enterprise sector (small business, cooperatives, commerce and industry).	**(a)** Encourage providers to link with other agencies to meet the specific needs of particular groups,eg. housebound older people, people leaving the prison system. **(b)** Conduct and support promotional campaigns to industry highlighting the capacity of ACE to provide cost effective training.
6.4 • There will be a diversified funding base.	**(a)** Identify opportunities for fee for service and labour market programs.
6.5 • There will be systems in place for the appropriate accountability by ACE for the expenditure of government funds.	**(a)** Establish where they are not already operating, systems for ACE to account appropriately for expenditure of government funds.

MEMBERSHIP OF AEC/MOVEET WORKING PARTY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL POLICY ON ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Responses and/or enquiries regarding the draft may be directed to the working party members in your State or Territory. Their names and addresses are given below.

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